

JOSEPH ANTONISHEK

SENIOR EXECUTIVE CHEF SOUTHEAST ASIA & PACIFIC AT KARMA GROUP

With a career that spans almost three decades, Joseph Antonishek has experienced what many people in his field could only dream of, from working at the best restaurants alongside the world's famous chefs to helping the culinary department at five-star properties. Now, he is the man in charge of your dining delights at Karma Group properties in Southeast Asia & Pacific. Exquisite Taste had the chance to talk with him amid his busy schedule, and learn more about why he loves this industry so much.

by Rizky Adityo

Q: Can you share with us what keeps you busy these days?

A: Besides constantly evolving our menus at Karma Kandara, I travel quite often as I oversee the culinary aspects of all of Karma Group Resorts in Southeast Asia. Currently, I am overseeing several resorts in Bali, Java, Vietnam and Thailand. I will also travel to India soon to learn about Indian cuisine and culture from our chefs in India. Doing what I am doing right now is a dream career opportunity that I am grateful for beyond belief.

Q: How did you first get into the culinary industry?

A: Originally, I wanted to become either an architect or an industrial designer. All of that changed at our summer cottage in Canada when one evening my grandfather mixed three ingredients from the fridge to make Thousand Island salad dressing. I was amazed, and from that point forward I was hooked on food and the endless possibilities of creation.

Q: As an executive chef, you have the freedom to create a whole new different experience for diners. Do you see that as a challenge?

A: Absolutely not, it's a fun opportunity which we encourage. In addition to the four different tasting menus at di Mare and the Chef's Table Experience in Veritas - the exclusive wine room within di Mare restaurant, we also offer an "Oh-My, Kasih!" menu. It's a play on the Japanese Omakase and a play on the Indonesian word kasih, to give.

With the "Oh-My, Kasih!" menu, either I or my executive sous chef meet a table

of up to six people upon arrival and ask a few questions about dietary restrictions, childhood memories, favourite types of food, etc. From there, we customise a special tasting menu just for them.

Q: You are also responsible for creating memorable menus for Karma Group properties in Southeast Asia & Pacific. In your own words, what makes Karma Group different from other venues in terms of culinary offerings?

A: At Karma Group we don't say we are in the hospitality business; we say we are in the entertainment business because we create experiences. When you have access to The Karma Group as a member, you have access to some of the best experiences that are on people's bucket lists all around the world. Whether it is the ability to spend an afternoon with your toes in the white sands of Karma Beach or take a three-day Nile River cruise on our recently launched Karma Karnak River Boat.

As a senior executive chef within the company, not only do I have access to our resorts across the globe but I also have access to specific ingredients that can only be found in these regions. For instance, when I returned from Egypt, I brought back spices from the souk in Cairo which are used in making Bamia, an Egyptian goat leg and okra stew featured on our lunch and villa dining menu at Karma Kandara. This gives our members and guests an opportunity to experience one of our resorts via authentic taste.

Q: Let's say there's a guest from out of town who only has time for

one dish and one drink, what would you recommend having at Karma Kandara?

A: It would either be my Butterfish Aburi or the Ayam Cemani Agnolotti. Both dishes represent the complexity yet simplicity of my interpretation of Indonesian cuisine. They both pair nicely with our Karma Sauvignon Blanc from France. In preparing the Butterfish Aburi, I first cure fresh butterfish with volcanic salt from Java, then torch it lightly before slicing it sashimi style. It's then dressed with coconut vinegar from Tabanan, and fresh pressed sugar cane juice mixed with curry leaf, green chillies and matoa fruit - typical fruit from Papua. It's clean, fresh, and packed with flavour.

To make the agnolotti, I use magical black chickens which are more commonly used for ceremonies rather than eating. The chicken is completely black, from the feathers to the eyes, tongue, and even the skin. A stuffing is made with mascarpone and chicken livers, put inside semolina pasta dough, accompanied by a dark chicken sage jus, pickled mustard seeds, and topped with black chicken skin crackling and a burnt candlenut foam. Local legend says Ayam Cemani chickens can bring good luck, but I believe whichever of these dishes you chose, you will be lucky!

Q: If you had to choose only one dish to have for the rest of your life, what would it be?

A: It would have to be our family perogies. In 1913, my great-grandfather emigrated from Ukraine at age 12, passing through Ellis Island to become a coal miner in Windber, Pennsylvania. He brought with him a dream of a better life and his mother's perogies recipe.

Every holiday over generations, perogies were always on the dining table. I think that's what it is all about - tradition and family. The family you come from, the next generation of family you create, your friends who are family, or the family you work with. Eventually, every chef's ticket machine will come to an end and it's what you leave behind in terms of memories that will be your legacy.

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BUTTERFISH ABURI

SALT-CURED BUTTERFISH

Ingredients:

- 500g fresh butterfish fillet, no skin
- 200g volcanic salt from Java
- 250g white sugar
- 50g pink peppercorns, crushed
- 6 fresh curry leaves, julienne sliced

Method:

1. In a mixing bowl combine the salt, sugar, and spices - mix well.
2. Line a shallow dish with plastic wrap and evenly spread out a third of the salt mixture.
3. Place the butterfish fillet on top of the salt mixture.
4. Cover the butterfish with the remaining salt mixture, packing it on the sides to completely cover the fish.
5. Fold the plastic wrap around the salt-crusted fish and twist to tighten.
6. Place in the fridge for up to 1.5 hours, until the fish begins to feel slightly firm but not dry.
7. Remove the fish from the plastic wrap and rinse under cool water to remove the salt mixture.
8. Pat the fish dry with a paper towel, rewrap in plastic wrap and place in the fridge until ready to assemble.

SUGAR CANE COCONUT VINEGAR DRESSING

Ingredients:

- 250ml sugar cane juice, freshly pressed
- 150ml coconut vinegar
- 2 green bird's eye chillies, thinly sliced
- 4 fresh curry leaves, julienne sliced
- 5g sugar
- Juice of 1 lime, freshly squeezed
- Sea salt to taste
- White pepper, freshly ground, to taste

Method:

1. Combine all the ingredients in a mixing bowl.
2. Season to taste with salt and white pepper.
3. Place in a covered container and store in the fridge for 30 minutes to macerate flavours.

To Assemble:

Cured butterfish
Torch
Sugar cane coconut dressing

- 30g shallots, thinly sliced
- 4 green bird's eye chillies, thinly sliced
- 6 fresh curry leaves, sliced julienne

- 12 matoa fruit, peeled, seed removed
- 60g jicama, peeled, diced
- 1 lime
- Coarse sea salt
- Edible flowers for garnish

Method:

1. Place the butterfish on a metal tray and torch lightly on all sides.
2. Transfer the torched butterfish to a cutting board and slice thinly, sashimi style.
3. In shallow dishes, evenly divide the jicama.
4. Place the sliced butterfish in a fan on top of the jicama.
5. Add the bird's eye chilli and curry leaves to the sugar cane dressing, lightly dress the fish up to halfway up the jicama.
6. Add one and half matoa fruit to each dish.
7. Divide the shallots evenly between the dishes.
8. Micro plane a little bit of fresh lime zest over each dish.
9. Garnish with edible flowers.
10. Sprinkle coarse sea salt on each slice of the butterfish just before serving.

